

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7153

INFO DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC

FAA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY LONDON

FAA BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US

SUBJ: CIVAIR: CONCORDE INAUGURAL FLIGHT

1. CONCORDE WAS NUMBER ONE NEWS STORY IN FRANCE ON OCCASION OF INAUGURAL FLIGHT TO RIO JAN. 21 OPENING CONCORDE COMMERCIAL SERVICE BY AIR FRANCE. LE MONDE AND LE FIGARO HAD SPECIAL FEATURE SECTIONS DEVOTED TO CONCORDE AND THE DAY OF THE FLIGHT THE STORY WAS OF COURSE FRONT PAGE NEWS FOR ALL PAPERS. THE STORY MONOPOLIZED RADIO NEWSCASTS THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND THE TAKEOFF FROM ORLY, THE REFUELING STOP AT DAKAR, AND THE ARRIVAL AT RIO WERE ALL CARRIED LIVE ON FRENCH TV.

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2. MUCH OF THE COVERAGE IN NEWSPAPERS WAS OF COURSE

BACKGROUND TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE CONCORDE PROJECT, DESCRIBING THE AIRCRAFT AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS, AND EXPLOITING THE HUMAN INTEREST SIDE OF THE EVENT. INEVITABLY THERE WAS MENTION OF THE ALL-IMPORTANT US DECISION STILL BEING AWAITED THAT WAS SO CRUCIAL TO THE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS OF CONCORDE. A FEW DISCORDANT NOTES WERE ALSO SOUNDED, NOTABLY IN A SCATHING FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL IN LE QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS THAT CALLED CONCORDE "ONE OF THE MOST FRIGHTENING MISHAPS THAT HAS EVER BEFALLEN FRENCH INDUSTRY". A LE MONDE ARTICLE ENTITLED "AMERICAN SPITE" STARTS OFF BY QUESTIONING AMERICAN "GOOD FAITH" AND SPEAKS OF THE "FAILURE" OF OUR SST PROJECT WHILE THE FRENCH AND EUROPEANS SUCCEEDED WITH THEIRS. THE REST OF THE ARTICLE, HOWEVER, IS FAIRLY SOLID REPORTING OF THE EXTENT AND INTENSITY OF ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN THE US AND THE DIFFERENT ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH CONCORDE MUST NOW FEND ITS WAY. "IF A PLANE IS A GOOD ONE, COMPANIES ARE OBLIGED TO BUY IT, WHATEVER THEY SAY AND WHATEVER IT COSTS", WRITES LE MONDE, WHICH CONCLUDES: "CONCORDE WILL HAVE BEEN DEBATED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC IN A WAY THAT IT HAS NEVER BEEN IN FRANCE OR GREAT BRITAIN, WHERE THE PROJECT WAS DECIDED UPON IN SEMI-CLANDESTINE FASHION...THE FRENCH ARE PROUD OF CONCORDE, BUT DID THEY WANT IT, DID THEY AT ANY TIME HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCEPTING OR REFUSING IT?"

3. L'HUMANITE COMMENT IS OF SPECIAL INTEREST, GIVEN COMMUNIST EFFORTS (PARIS 2027) TO BECOME IDENTIFIED AS THE REAL CHAMPIONS OF CONCORDE. IN ARTICLE JAN. 21 ENTITLED "OPPOSE THE AMERICAN DIKTAT", RENE PIQUET, MEMBER OF PARTY'S POLITBURO, CLAIMS THAT GISCARD TRIP TO US NEXT MAY IN CONCORDE WON'T EFFACE FACT THAT HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONCORDE'S WOES TODAY SINCE, PIQUET CLAIMS, HE HELD BACK ON NEEDED FUNDS FOR PROJECT WHEN HE WAS FINANCE MINISTER. GISCARD IS ALSO ABOUT TO ABANDON FRENCH SOVEREIGNTY

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IN AIRCRAFT CONSTRUCTION MATTERS AND ACCEPT SUBORDINATE ROLE TO US IN THE NAME OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, WRITES PIQUET, WHO ASKS THAT GOF INTERVENE TO ENSURE LANDING RIGHTS FOR CONCORDE AND MAKE AVAILABLE FUNDS TO PERMIT CONTINUATION OF CONCORDE PROGRAM. ACCOMPANYING NEWS ARTICLE ALLEGES THAT GOF, CONFRONTED WITH US HESITATION TO PERMIT CONCORDE ENTRY, "REMAINS SILENT, AND WITH RESIGNATION

AWAITS THE DECISION WITHOUT LIFTING A FINGER. THE
ELYSEE, OUT OF CONCERN FOR ATLANTICISM, REFUSES TO
UNDERTAKE THE POLITICAL BATTLE THAT IS NECESSARY."
THE POLITICAL BATTLE HAS THEREFORE BEEN TAKEN UP
BY THE WORKERS, WRITES L'HUMANITE, WHO "DEMAND THAT
GOF ABANDON ITS POLICY OF SUBMISSION TO WASHINGTON."
L'HUMANITE ALSO DEVOTES ARTICLE AND PHOTOS TO DELIVERY
OF PETITIONS TO ELYSEE BY CGT DELEGATION AS REPORTED
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RUSH

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